

## Appendix E. Policy Recommendations

**Overview:** This section contains the recommendations of the Trails Council regarding the draft Gaviota Coast Plan and long-range planning for improved coastal access. Recommendations include updates to the goals, objectives and policies of the Gaviota Coast Plan, Chapter 4: Parks, Recreation and Trails, as well as a potential timeline for accomplishing Coastal Trail implementation.

### 5.1 Recommended In-Text Revisions

The Trails Council recommends that the Planning and Development Department revise the draft Gaviota Coast Plan to insert the following in-text revisions:

#### Gaviota Coast Plan In-Text Revision Recommendations

**Purpose and Intent:** The County recognizes that provision of new parks, open space and recreation and trail opportunities are a key element of the Gaviota Coast Plan and that the level of such improvements should reflect this Planning Area's national, state and county importance as a recreational resource. Trails and outdoor recreation are an important recreational activity to residents of our County and the state, foster an appreciation of the natural environment and promote the public health and welfare. While trails must be sensitively designed to respect agriculture and biological resources, they are a Coastal Act priority use and a high priority for the County. As such, provision of these types of improvements is a high priority and must be actively pursued.

**Goal:** Protect existing public access and actively promote expansion of recreation, coastal access and trails along the Gaviota Coast as a high priority.

**Objective:** Substantially increase opportunities for provision of public trails within the Gaviota Planning Area, including completion of the California Coastal Trail, provision of well planned coastal vertical access points and foothill trails located on both public and private lands.

**Objective:** The County shall strive to complete the following improvements by 2025:

- Acquire nearshore blufftop easements for the California Coastal Trail from Bacara to El Capitan State Beach Park, and develop and open the California Coastal Trail throughout this reach.
- Work with California State Parks and the California Coastal Commission to reopen the closed segment of the existing Class I bikeway that links El Capitan and Refugio State Beaches.
- Acquire and develop at least two coastal access points along the east end of the coast at Dos Pueblos Ranch, Edwards Point, Santa Barbara Ranch or Paradiso del Mare.
- Work with California State Parks to develop and open a three mile-long blufftop segment (i.e., south of US Hwy 101) of the California Coastal Trail from Gaviota State Park east the Gaviota Marine Terminal.
- Develop at least one major coastal access point and associated public improvements along the west end of the coast at Arroyo Hondo or Gaviota Marine Terminal.
- Acquire easements for and develop at least two foothill trails that link coastal areas to public lands in the Los Padres National Forest on the east and west ends of the Coast.
- Work with Caltrans, the Union Pacific Railroad and interested organizations to complete a Transportation Corridor Plan to address public access issues and ensures that all future improvements to these facilities accommodate and foster public coastal access.

### Policy Recommendations

**Policy Rec-1:** The County shall actively promote expansion of public trails, coastal access and recreational opportunities within the Gaviota Planning Area, using its regulatory authority, incentives and other tools to acquire and develop trails, coastal access, open space, and recreational facilities.

**Policy REC-2:** The County shall protect and defend the public’s right to access to and along the shoreline, including actively pursuing acquisition and development of a near-shore alignment of the California Coastal Trail and planned coastal access points.

**Policy Rec-3:** Consistent with adopted State policy, the California Coastal Trail along the Gaviota Coast shall be located “as close as physically and aesthetically feasible to the shoreline” and “within the sights and sounds of the Pacific Ocean”, generally shoreward of both the Union Pacific Railroad and US Hwy 101 wherever physically feasible.

**Policy Rec-4:** For all pending private and public development projects with planned or existing recreational uses, the County shall use the environmental and planning review process to fully explore options for new trails, coastal access and parking, and ways to promote their acquisition and development.

**Policy REC-5:** Existing free roadside parking on county roads and US 101 are key to public use and enjoyment of the Gaviota Coast and shall be protected. Blocking off such areas or posting of no parking signs shall be strictly limited.

**Policy REC-6:** All future purchases of open space on the Gaviota Coast using public funds shall include public trails and access as a priority use; opportunities for public review of and input into the management and recreational use of such open spaces areas shall be provided.

**Policy REC-7:** The County shall coordinate with private non-profit organizations such as the Santa Barbara County Trails Council, Montecito Trails Foundation, Santa Barbara Mountain Bike Trail Volunteers and Los Padres Forest Association on the siting, design, construction and maintenance of public trails.

**Policy Rec-8:** All improvements to the US 101, UPRR and County roads shall be designed to protect and expand public access to and along the coast.

**Policy REC-9:** The County shall prepare a Transportation Corridor Plan to govern all future improvements to US 101, the UPRR and County roads along the Gaviota Coast, including new UPRR crossing points (e.g., at grade crossings, bridges and tunnels), long-term relocation of the UPRR to address bluff retreat and avoid the need for new coastal protections structures and improved access off of US Hwy 101.

### Acquisition Tools

*The Gaviota Coast Plan should provide a mix of regulatory exaction tools (e.g., rezones, home size restrictions, building envelope limitations, specific plans, development standards) and incentives (e.g., increased home size, limited increased density, increased building envelope sizes) in exchange for dedication of open space or trail easements. These changes should be “initiated” by Planning Commission as part of the hearing process to acquire some force of law and be included in EIR.*

## 5.2 Recommended Settlements

Trails Council recommends staff investigate and draft a mix of land use regulations and incentives to ensure acquisition of coastal open space and/ or easements for a nearshore alignment of the California Coastal Trail on the 8501 Hollister Avenue, LLC (formerly Gaviota Holdings), the Dos Pueblos Ranch and the Las Varas Ranch as follows:

**8501 Hollister, LLC (formerly Gaviota Holdings):** Initiate a Specific Plan overlay on the three 8501 Hollister LLC parcels that mandates that the coastal bluff south of the UPRR be retained as open space or allowed to develop with dedication of a nearshore alignment of the Coastal Trail. Existing blufftop development potential (1 unit) shall be transferred to inland portions of the ranch at the rate of 2 to 1 (up to 2 units). Include a set of development standards to ensure nearshore location of Coastal Trail, provision of public coastal access, archaeological site protection and habitat restoration. Acquisition of bluff top open space at 8510 Hollister would protect a major archaeological site, important habitat and facilitate public coastal access and completion of the Coastal Trail. However, development south of the UPRR could be permitted if a nearshore easement for the Coastal trail and coastal access were provided.

**Dos Pueblos Ranch:** Initiate a Specific Plan overlay on Dos Pueblos Ranch that identifies acquisition of the 30+/- acres of the Ranch south of the UPRR is a high priority for public recreation. In order to provide an incentive to deed this area to the public, permit development of one additional unit (creation of an additional parcel) over base zoning on the portion of the Ranch South of US 101. The County has planned Dos Pueblos Canyon mouth for public acquisition for 30 years and the Gaviota Coast Plan is the County’s best opportunity to achieve this long held goal, while compensating the property owner through development transfer.

**Las Varas Ranch:** Initiate a Specific Plan overlay on Las Varas Ranch that mandates that the 108 acre coastal bluffs south of the UPRR be retained as rural open space either for use as grazing land, habitat preservation or acquisition as public open space. Existing blufftop development potential (2 units) shall be transferred to inland portions of the ranch at the rate of 2 to 1 (up to 4 units). Include a set of development standards to ensure nearshore location of Coastal Trail, public coastal access, habitat restoration, etc. Initiate a rezone to clustered agricultural zoning only if required to implement specific plan. The County has planned the blufftops at Las Varas Ranch for public acquisition for 30 years and the Gaviota Coast Plan is the County’s best opportunity to achieve this long held goal, while compensating the property owner through development transfer.

### Home Size Restrictions

*An alternate approach for 8501 Hollister Avenue and Las Varas Ranch would be to place building/ use envelope (e.g., 1 acre) and home size restrictions (e.g., 2,500 square feet) on the blufftop areas due to their visually and environmentally sensitive characteristics, (ESH, major archaeological sites), but permit development of larger envelopes and homes contingent upon receipt of the public benefits of dedications of easements for the Coastal Trail and access. The use of such limitations in development size and intensity and the easing of such restrictions upon provision of public benefits is a standard widely employed planning tool.*